

NEW JERSEY STATE COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND  
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ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 1968 - JUNE 30, 1969

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To: Members, Board of Managers  
New Jersey State Commission for the Blind

We respectfully submit herewith the Annual Report of the Commission's activities and accomplishments for the Fiscal Year 1969.

EDUCATION SERVICE

During the year 250 children were referred which, when added to those on register, made a total of 1,973 youngsters in service. In the same period, 196 children were closed so that as of June 30, 1969, there were 1,777 remaining on the register.

The Education caseload has shown a net increase in the number of children served during each year for the past ten (10) years. The increase in 1969 was 62 children and this, in general, has been the pattern in the past. The increases are principally due to general population increases in the State; additional numbers of multiply-handicapped children who are also blind; as well as the effect of certain public health hazards such as the German Measles (Rubella) epidemic of 1964-65. As of this report, slightly more than 50% of the total number of children in the Education caseload have serious additional handicaps, one or more, along with blindness. This is particularly true among the "Rubella" children where in addition to the vision problem, hearing loss, neurological impairment and cardiac involvement are likely to be present. The implications of this, for program, are more multi-discipline facilities for diagnostic evaluation and for the development of special-

ized programs for preschool youngsters as well as school-age youngsters to minimize the effects of disablement. To this end, the Commission conducted a demonstration class for preschool deaf-blind children at Newark State College with excellent results. Further expansion of this program is in prospect. In addition, the Commission is working with United Hospitals in Newark, the State Department of Health and the Public Health Service in an effort to develop a unique multi-discipline center for evaluating seriously disabled blind children.

The classification of the 1,777 children continuing in service at year end by school needs is as follows:

Preschool	-	177
Local School Placement (Elementary and Secondary)	-	873
Special Classes in Public Schools	-	201
Residential Schools and Treatment Centers	-	152
College and University	-	82
Multi-Handicapped - Not in School (Age 7 and up)	-	61
In State Institutions (M.R. and M.I.)	-	180
Unclassified (Recent Referrals)	-	<u>51</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>	-	<u>1,777</u>

Special Federal Grants and Summer Camp.

A Title I Federal grant for disadvantaged children was continued and made it possible to give supervision to children at out of State residential centers.

During the summer, 512 camper weeks were made available to children at

Camp Marcella. This is a marked decrease over the previous year which reflects the need for added facilities and Counselors to provide for multi-handicapped campers who require more supervision. A number of other programs for various age groups was conducted at the Rogoff Building which included a home economics training session for older girls. Several teenage groups spent week ends at the Camp with teaching personnel to improve skills of daily living and social maturity. Similar groups were organized in a number of different areas in the State by staff Counselors.

The Department in co-operation with the Vocational Rehabilitation section of the agency sponsored a four (4) week evaluation and training program for 25 college-bound high school juniors and seniors at the Commission's Rehabilitation Center. Student interests, aptitudes and manipulative skills were tested and training in academic and practical areas was provided.

#### Instructional Materials and Textbook Center.

The number of shipments from the Materials Center continued to rise. There were 48,351 shipments of texts and educational materials. There was a marked decline in the number of braille volumes which was more than offset by a large increase in the use of recorded materials. The most pressing need of the Materials and Textbook Center is additional tape copying equipment which we hope to secure next year.

#### EYE HEALTH SERVICE

The function of the Eye Health Service is to prevent blindness and to help conserve the vision of New Jersey citizens through community-wide vision screening programs, through public information, as well as through direct



assistance and counsel to individuals requiring surgery or treatment.

In the case service sphere, the number served totaled 1,011. Sight was restored or improved for 245 individuals.

The Preschool Vision Detection Program for Amblyopia is beginning its fourth (4th) year of operation. This has been a project that has been developed successfully through the financial support of the Fund for the New Jersey Blind. During the year, 52 community-wide detection programs were conducted preceded by training sessions for volunteers in co-operation with Parent-Teacher Associations, Lions Clubs, Delta Gamma Sorority members, and similar groups. Staff have also supervised screenings in Head Start programs in Newark, Paterson, Plainfield, Trenton, Englewood and Middlesex and have developed a written guide for volunteers. Head Start programs assume financial responsibility for their own follow-up care. In all, 10,313 children were screened using 1,376 volunteers trained by Commission staff. Seven hundred sixty-seven (767) children were referred for follow-up and complete eye examinations.

In the Glaucoma Control Program the 14th State-wide detection program was conducted in co-operation with the Medical Society of New Jersey at 85 hospitals. Eleven thousand six hundred fifty-nine (11,659) adults were examined at these centers (a slight increase in public participation as compared with the previous year) at no cost and 561 Glaucoma suspects were referred to the Commission for individual follow-up. To control Glaucoma requires continuous treatment and follow-up. At year's end there were 3,297 on the Glaucoma Registry of the Commission.

Diabetes also requires continuous control and in about 12% of the Commission's caseload is a factor in vision loss. The department maintains a growing registry which at the end of the year totaled 1,080.

The Traveling Eye Unit provided 211 days of service and 5,246 examinations. Among "pocket of need" groups that were reached were 14 nursing homes, five (5) correctional institutions, five (5) centers for the visually handicapped and retarded including the Woodbridge State School; three (3) centers in southern New Jersey for migrant workers and their children, the Florence Crittenton Home, Marlboro State Hospital, as well as groups of Senior Citizens. In addition, in co-operation with health departments, community action groups and local agencies the Unit sponsored three (3) programs covering a number of locations in areas of urban poverty.

To inform the public as to prevention needs, 21 lectures and one radio broadcast to schools, colleges and community groups were conducted. There were 74 showings of the Commission movie and a large variety of educational exhibits at Fairs, Conventions, etc.

#### HOME TEACHING AND SOCIAL SERVICES (HOME SERVICE)

The Home Service program serves newly-blinded adults and homebound individuals through an array of services which includes personal adjustment, training in communication skills, handwork training for leisure or occupation, and assistance with personal, family and social problems. Working with the blind person chiefly in his home setting, workers traveled 106,000 miles and made 4,164 client calls. The number served during the year was 2,766 individuals.

Some trends or major activities should be highlighted:

1. During the year 983 Talking Book machines were sent to clients with the total number in use exceeding 3,300. Of this number, 285 were physically handicapped individuals unable to read and, therefore, now eligible under a change in Federal law. Mail delivery of machines continues to be the basic distribution method releasing valuable professional staff time.
2. An innovation for the department has been the assignment of a Program Specialist who, in this capacity, co-ordinates: the Volunteer Service for the Adult Blind; Public Assistance; the Instructor Assistant Program; Geriatric Blind; and an adult education program.
3. In order to meet the large demand for Home Teaching services, particularly with homemaking, the department has inaugurated the Instructor Assistant program. Of the 17 Instructor Assistants recruited and trained to date about one-half have been drawn from the disadvantaged segments of the population. All assignments are planned and carried out under the supervision of a professional Home Teacher. Each Instructor has a skill in at least one subject area and a demonstrated ability to teach blind adults; must provide his own transportation; and is responsible for progress reports.
4. An agency Committee assigned to study and evaluate the special or unmet needs of the aging blind has secured a Research and Development Grant through the Seeing Eye, Inc., in Morristown, to provide for staff and project funding. This summer a corps of six (6) Interview-

ers are conducting a survey of the over 60 blind population to determine their needs. The questionnaire in use has been compiled with the assistance of Consultants from the Federal government and a Statistician of the Division of Public Welfare. It focuses on five (5) major client needs: health, housing, income, occupation, and social participation.

5. The department is working with the Union County Regional High Schools in establishing classes for blind adults and integrating them into existing classes. Proposed classes will consist of table games, fashion and beauty care.

#### VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE

During the year 293 employment placements were made. This was a 10% increase over the previous year and is the highest of any year of operating this program. On an annual basis, the aggregate earnings of those placed in employment amounted \$834,000. This exceeded by far the State's share in the cost of the Vocational Rehabilitation program for the year. Earnings last year totaled \$650,000.

There were excellent developments in the Vocational Rehabilitation service so that more people were served including more seriously disabled individuals now eligible as a result of amendments to the Vocational Rehabilitation Act. Recognition of the agency's progress has come from various sources and more and more of the professional staff have been called upon to consult, advise or participate at the Federal, State and local level. Within the State, extensive consultation has been made available to the Division of



Mental Retardation, the Mt. Carmel Guild, the Division of Aging and others on the vocational training needs of specialized groups.

Some of the year's highlights include:

1. Assignment of a Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to provide high school juniors and seniors, who are not planning to continue their education beyond the secondary school level, with vocational guidance and counseling. A questionnaire has been devised and made available to students so they can obtain academic, social and vocational information as well as personal counsel.
2. 2,176 clients were served by the department - a 15% increase over the year before. During the past two (2) years, the caseload increase was 39%.
3. The Rehabilitation Training Center, operated by the Commission, had 5,100 student days of training which is about the average of past years. Eighty-nine (89) different clients were served. During the year the need to improve physical co-ordination among some congenitally blind clients became apparent. The Center embarked upon a program of folk dancing which greatly improved co-ordination and socialization and has become a vital and integral part of the overall Center program.
4. The special counseling unit dealing with the Multi-Handicapped blind continues to develop additional training opportunities around the State in special centers for other handicaps that will also accept blind people with secondary problems. Needed still are more solu-

tions for the extended or terminal employment of such individuals after training. Although the previous year's activities reflect substantial progress there still remain areas potentially beneficial to Multi-Handicapped individuals which need to be developed.

5. This year saw the realization of an added District Office in Paterson to serve northern Counties. The Camden District Office continues to function efficiently in providing the services of the agency to clients in the southern portion of the State.

#### Vending Stand Program.

At year end, there were 55 vending stands in operation. Four(4) were new; a number of marginal stands have been closed; and a number upgraded. Average annual earnings for operators is now \$5,592 as against \$4,436 last year. Gross sales for the year amounted to \$1,532,500 with net income to operators of \$301,700. Chief problems are delays in construction; lack of additional interested blind operators because of other opportunities, and the need for improved program legislation, still pending. During the year, two (2) highly productive snack bars were opened - one at the Sales Tax Building and one at the Motor Vehicle Building in Trenton.

#### Contract Workshop Program.

This program is for marginal blind workers not, as yet, ready or able to take competitive employment. Gross sales for the year increased by 21% to \$366,000. The number of blind people employed totaled 87, about the same as last year with \$87,095 paid out in wages - a small drop-off. The Federal minimum wage of \$1.60 per hour or better is paid at the Shops. Some sighted

individuals and a number with handicaps other than blindness are employed for those portions of work requiring vision.

A new evaluation and training program has been implemented which will serve a dual purpose: (1) to provide service to the Vocational Rehabilitation Department; and (2) build a backlog of capable workers for the Shops for peak periods. Training of clients in specific operations and hand skills will be provided. Clients who can take outside employment will be encouraged to do so.

After two (2) years of negotiating, Social Security coverage was made available in January for all Shop workers as an employment benefit which will minimize dependency in later years.

The Facilities and Workshop Co-ordinator of the agency and representatives of the New Jersey State Rehabilitation Commission compiled a State-wide Plan for Rehabilitation Facilities and Sheltered Workshops. Funding for Federal grant-in-aid programs for rehabilitation facilities and sheltered workshops was cut back severely due to government economy measures. However, the agency was able to secure approval for several projects under its supervision including:

1. The continuation of an Expansion Grant for the Camden Contract Shop which is in its second year.
2. The procurement of funds for a clerical training program initiated at the Mount Carmel Guild at the Commission's request.
3. A Construction Grant to the Mount Carmel Guild for the expansion of its Guildcraft program for multi-handicapped blind and the establish-

ment of a terminal workshop for the multi-handicapped blind.

Home Industries.

In 1969, total sales through the Home Industries craft program amounted to \$98,607. This gave employment to 50 consignors on average with earnings of \$43,981, a small decrease over the previous year. The department has been faced over the past several years by shrinking sales due to fewer sales people being available to our distributors because of economic conditions and a lessening public interest in craft articles. To adapt to this a new commercial program in machine sewing has been developed successfully with Federal support. Twenty-four (24) individuals have been trained and some 4,000 dozen of a standard clothing item produced. These will be sold by September 1 and represent an add to the gross sales of about \$30,000. In addition, the Home Industries Unit is experimenting with several new sales' approaches designed to increase outlets for more homebound blind individuals.

In October, the Home Industries Department moved into a very attractive new building in Edison designed to handle all of its operations.

Respectfully submitted,

NEW JERSEY STATE COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph Kohn".

Joseph Kohn  
Executive Director

August 8, 1969